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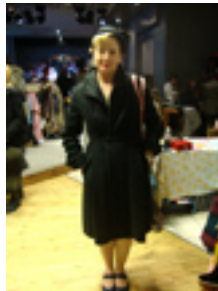
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The Rise of Vintage Fashion and the Vintage Consumer

**Tracy Diane Cassidy and
Hannah Rose Bennett**

Tracy Cassidy is a Lecturer in Fashion Marketing in the School of Design, University of Leeds. She is the first author of *Colour Forecasting* (Blackwell Publishers).
t.d.cassidy@leeds.ac.uk

Hannah Rose Bennett graduated at Manchester Metropolitan University where she studied International Fashion Marketing. She is a trainee footwear buyer for a multiple retailer.
hannah_r_bennett@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Amongst other factors, the current economic climate appears to have contributed to the trend of acquiring and reusing vintage clothing, accessories, and homeware products, particularly with young consumers. The popularity of vintage has also been linked to a change in consumer attitudes towards wearing and utilizing secondhand goods. In addition to a change in attitudes, other factors that contribute to the growth of the vintage trend include a change in values, the inclusion of vintage inspirations used in current designs by fashion designers, and in the trends marketed by the forecasting sector, eco-sustainability, the

media, and technology. Also vintage consumers and vintage retailers appear to share the viewpoint of the movement towards vintage fashion that has been assisted by a reaction against mass-produced fast fashion, as consumers strive for more individuality in their styling and garments. Eco-fashion and sustainable fashion ideals have emerged as solutions to the environmental issues that are currently inherent in the industry's manufacturing processes, which have government and pressure group support. This ideal and practice complements the vintage trend phenomenon. This article explores the principal factors and the demographics of vintage consumers in the UK and their consumption habits to better understand the appeal and scope of this growing trend.

KEYWORDS: vintage, trend, consumers, lifestyle, individuality

1. Introduction

The trend for vintage fashion may be considered a response to the negative publicity and effects of fast fashion. Fast fashion is essentially a business model for companies that manufacture products to retail in their own high street stores making use of vertically integrated production methods rather than the traditional linear model commonly used by fashion companies. The fast fashion method ensures quick response to consumer demand as all of the production occurs on one site. This has enabled retailers to have copies of celebrities' outfits available in store within a few weeks of their media coverage, a concept that has found particular favor amongst young consumers. However, consumers are symptomatically disposing of fast fashion goods as quickly as the fashion companies can produce them. As a consequence, as Small states in Brown (2010: 7), in 2009 UK consumers disposed of more than two tonnes (metric tons) of fast-fashion clothing that had only been worn around six times, on average, per garment. Meanwhile, the vintage trend gained a slow but steady growth, preserving and recycling fashion products that are representative of past trends from different eras of the twentieth century rather than the in-the-moment trends synonymous with fast fashion. While vintage, like fast fashion, can be traced back to the 1990s, more recently vintage has emerged as a much stronger fashion trend and the movement is showing the potential to increase further as consumers adopt new attitudes towards secondhand products. As Lucy Cavendish quotes fashion retail expert Mary Portas in *The Times* article on December 5, 2009, "The recession means we have all slowed down. We focus more on the value of something" and as more people view the concept of fast fashion as "vulgar" there seems to be a rise in the purchase of quality secondhand clothing. Also fast fashion has equated to large numbers of consumers wearing the same garments lacking individuality, which Palmer (2005: 197) posed as an

explanation for the increase in vintage fashion. She says, "Vintage has now shifted from subculture to mass culture because of the disappointing fact that, regardless of price, fashion today is rarely exclusive."

The rise of the vintage trend and the factors that are generally assumed responsible for its adoption are further discussed in this article after setting out the research methods used to obtain the data. The attraction of the trend is explored both from a consumer and a retailer perspective. The demographics of UK vintage consumers are then determined through primary research and their consumption habits are realized to make an informed assessment of the likely future of the trend.

1.1. Methodology

The most significant factors leading to the increase in the popularity of vintage are determined through a literature review. Resources include academic texts and newspaper articles. Semi-structured interviews conducted with six vintage retailers who were selling their merchandise at a Vintage Fair in Manchester, UK (November 13, 2010), are used to supplement the relatively limited available secondary sources. This data helps to gain a better understanding of the reasons why people choose to buy vintage fashions and the lifestyle factors of vintage consumers from a market perspective bringing depth to the secondary research findings.

Data collected through a questionnaire survey is then used to gain an understanding of vintage fashion consumer demographics (gender, age, and geographic locations), their spending habits, and preferred vintage eras. The results are discussed in sections 3.1 to 3.10. As a convenience sampling method was employed for the data collection there was no set criteria used to select the respondents. The results are therefore a likely representation of the entire market demographic as opposed to a cross-section of the marketplace.

The questionnaires were distributed online via appropriate social media networks including Facebook to access a large target group and also by prominent figures in the vintage industry; Fleur de Geurre, a well-known vintage blogger, promoted the link on her Twitter page, Mrs Moore's Vintage Store generated interest via Facebook, and the New Sheridan Club (<http://newsheridanclub.co.uk/>), "a social club for nostalgic dandies and tweedy dreamers," sent the link in an e-mail to their forum members. In addition questionnaires were distributed in two UK vintage fairs, again using a convenience sampling method, this time with a random selection approach to select people that clearly engaged with the vintage trend evidenced through their attire.

A total of 169 respondents completed the questionnaire online, including twenty-five international vintage consumers. A further fifty-five questionnaires were completed during the visits to the two UK vintage fairs: Vintage Threads, a monthly fair held at the Manchester Triangle shopping center; and Judy's Affordable Vintage Fair at De Montfort University Student Union, Leicester. Both events were very busy, making

it difficult to attract respondents without distracting them from their intention to shop, which was a condition imposed by the event organizers. Following the initial analysis of the data, two further informal telephone interviews were conducted with vintage consumer (A) on March 10, 2011 and with vintage retailer (B) on March 28, 2011, each lasting 15–20 minutes. Both interviewees were first interviewed at the fair in Manchester where they agreed to the follow up interviews. These additional interviews contributed valuable confirmation of, or supporting views for, the analysis.

While the primary research is relatively small scale and generalizations cannot be made as the sample is not a confirmed true representative of the population, the findings still contribute to a better understanding of the attraction of the trend and vintage consumption with some indications of vintage consumer typologies as a foundation for further exploration.

2. The Rise of Vintage

As John Walsh notes in an article for *The Independent* on August 28, 2010, for many vintage consumers, “vintage is about looking forward through the window of the past.” Nostalgia seems to have a vital role in vintage consumption, as vintage garments have the ability to represent past eras as stories are interweaved within the garments. Banim and Guy (2001: 218–9) illustrate the point that vintage clothes have historical attachments and by keeping garments those memories are preserved, which demonstrates that the wearer feels these memories are too precious to be discarded. Palmer (2005: 201) also suggests that the popularity of vintage clothing has risen during recent years as a yearning for familiarity in a society that is constantly changing with technological advancements, and becoming more fast-paced and detached than ever before. Vintage fashion can be seen as a form of stability against a rapidly changing environment, which helps consumers to reconnect with a time gone by where things were simpler. A study conducted by DeLong *et al.* (2005: 25–40) also demonstrates that the history of vintage pieces has an important influence on consumer purchasing decisions as it helps them to connect with a past era.

In the following subsections the most significant factors that have been linked to the rise of the vintage trend are presented.

2.1. Changing Attitudes

Emily Cronin notes in *The Guardian* on September 5, 2010, that changes in consumer attitudes towards the types of garments purchased can also be illustrated by the diminishing stigma against wearing real fur. Vintage retail interviewee from Memoir was originally unsure about buying vintage furs for retail; however, since stocking furs they have

realized the popularity and demand for them. They also comment on a particular high street retailer buying real vintage furs from a vintage warehouse to use as trims on their coats. This suggests a wider level of acceptance as the main industry retailers also adopt its use. BVintage Bazaar interviewee also reports selling six fur coats during that morning's trade at the Vintage Fair, Manchester. Vintage retailer interviewee from Snooky Ookums notes the change in consumer attitudes stating that consumers "buy fur as long as it is vintage, as it was produced in a time when the use of fur for fashion was considered acceptable."

2.1.1. Return to postwar values

With the effect of the recession on consumers' finances, many have been seen to opt to down-trade or even shop at charity shops, which may be viewed as a factor in the rise of vintage fashion. Sarah Butler reports in an article for *The Times* on April 6, 2010, that the practice of "hand-me-down enjoying a recessionary revival" with sales figures to support its claim. She also states that "the British Heart Foundation and Oxfam [had] reported like-for-like sales growth of 5 per cent or more in January and March." This is an interesting figure to take into account, especially as many high street chains are suffering and have actually seen falling sales due to the recession. Celia Walden also notes in *The Telegraph* on October 27, 2010, the impact the recession has on current fashion trends, stating that "the sociology behind the midi isn't quite so subtle: uncertain times have provoked a nostalgia for the safer values of yesteryear." The article continues with Brenda Polan saying, "We're in between [skirt] lengths because we're in between austerity and prosperity." The rise in popularity of the midi-skirt can also be attributed to the television series *Mad Men* (further discussed in 2.5.1), which can be said to evoke a true feeling of nostalgia in the minds of the viewer.

There is also a return to postwar mentality as vintage consumers adopt the "repair, reuse, and recycle" attitude. This challenges the "throwaway fashion" idea as people hold on to garments longer and choose to repair them rather than discard them. This echoes the attitudes of society in 1943; a mass-observation study conducted during this period revealed that "women were spending more time on repairs, alterations, [and] generally making-do" (Sladen 1995: 14). Currently in the UK Channel 4 is televising the program *Make Do And Mend*, a term very much associated with the Second World War period, which informs viewers of all manners of money-saving tips for modern living.

2.2. Fashion Trends and Designers

Designers still take inspiration from vintage clothing to produce current collections. As Little Red Vintage interviewee states "all fashion trends are recycled, they come from vintage styles." Selected past decades have been a focal point of fashion trends for much of the past two decades and still appear set to be key inspirations for some time to come.

Garbo Antiques interviewee states that a well-known fashion designer bought an authentic cavalry coat dated 1904 from their eBay shop. The designer informed the vintage retailer that they would be deconstructing the jacket to use the pattern. Garbo Antiques also sold a vintage lady's suit back to its original designer via eBay; stating that many designers appear to be buying back their old collections either to preserve in archives to maintain the history of the fashion house, or as in this case to use the original garment to retrieve the pattern.

2.2.1. Style, quality, and individuality

Palmer and Clark (2005: 197) suggest that the increase in popularity for vintage fashion is an alternative response to the trend for fast fashion, which is produced en masse and leads to many people wearing the same items of clothing. Vintage consumers are trying to escape from this trend and create individual identities for themselves by wearing something unique that is often one of a kind (DeLong *et al.* 2005: 26). Vintage retailers support this view, Little Red Vintage interviewee states that vintage fashion is about "originality, authenticity and quality"; Garbo Antiques interviewee adds that consumers are "looking for individuality instead of mass manufactured garments" and that vintage offers "better quality and styles than you would find on the high street" (see Figures 1 and 2). Vintage retailers at the Vintage Fair in Manchester (November 13, 2010) all noticed an increase in sales of knitted jumpers and fur leading up to Winter and demand for sequined items as eveningwear. Garbo Antiques' bestsellers were declared to be 1950s full skirts, stating that "they can't get enough to meet demand" and that consumers in London are particularly interested in 1920s beaded dresses, which suggests a geographical difference in consumer demand for particular garments.

Palmer and Clark (2005: 4) and DeLong *et al.* (2005: 28) suggest vintage fashion allows consumers to mix in elements of the past with contemporary clothing to create new identities. They also suggest vintage fashion allows the consumer to become their own designer as they alter styles and have the ability to fashion an outfit that might not necessarily be considered on trend by the fashion industry. They identify this as a "symbol of fashion independence" (Palmer and Clark 2005: 174) as vintage consumers buy into a trend that they identify with as an individual, rather than what is projected to them via fashion industry players.

2.3. Eco-sustainability

Vintage fashion can be viewed as a part of consumer interest in ethical clothing as it is considered as a form of recycling and reusing fashion. In today's throwaway society UK consumers alone generate "2.35 million tonnes" of waste clothing in landfill every year (Fletcher 2008: 98). Arnold (2009: 64) suggests that increased media coverage on environmental

Figure 1

Two young men shopping at Judy's Affordable Vintage Fair held at De Montfort University Student Union, Leicester, UK. Photograph: Hannah Rose Bennett.



issues has influenced consumers to make more conscientious purchasing decisions. Vintage retail interviewee from Sophwaa's Corner supports this notion stating, "fast fashion is consumerism rather than fashion, vintage is very much to do with recycling and its popularity has increased now that the stigma for second-hand clothing has decreased." The recession has also led to a change in consumer attitudes as people have less discretionary income and are therefore limiting the amount of money they spend on clothing.

2.4. Celebrities

Celebrities also help to improve the image of vintage fashion. In the past, wearing previously worn garments was frowned upon by the fashion community and the secondhand culture was seen as something that

Figure 2

Vintage Retailer at the Manchester Vintage and Textile Fair, Armitage Centre, Manchester, UK.

Photograph: Hannah Rose Bennett.



only people with lower incomes would buy into as a form of necessity rather than desire. As Garbo Antiques interviewee states, “second-hand clothing used to be for the poor but thanks to supermodels it is now the ‘in-thing.’” Celebrities have recently given the vintage fashion scene a makeover and redirected fashion-conscious consumers to focus on a once overlooked source of fashion. Joanna Blythe notes in an article in *The Daily Mail* on November 12, 2007, celebrities such as Renee Zellweger and Reese Witherspoon have helped to encourage the move towards vintage fashion by wearing vintage attire to red carpet events. As media documents, celebrities move towards wearing vintage dresses this seal of approval is then noted and adopted by fashion enthusiasts who use celebrities for fashion guidance. British singer Lily Allen quit the music scene “to launch her own vintage fashion store and label, Lucy in Disguise” (Smith 2010), which allows women to rent vintage dresses

that they otherwise could not afford for nights out. When asked about the factors that have led to the increase in popularity of vintage fashion, all retailers questioned at the Printworks Vintage Fair, Manchester, UK (November 13, 2010) attributed this rise to celebrities. Celebrities are also collaborating with retailers to produce “new” vintage lines which are heavily influenced by vintage styles but are newly produced. Such ranges include the Kate Moss collections for Topshop and Dita Von Teese for Wonderbra.

Dita Von Teese can be viewed as the spokesperson for the burlesque industry as she is widely recognized as the “undisputed Queen of Burlesque” as an article in *The Independent* on March 25, 2010, quotes extracts from her book entitled *Burlesque and the Art of the Tease* (2006). Burlesque has been around for hundreds of years; however, Von Teese managed to catapult this form of entertainment back into the limelight by attracting a new, modern audience. The burlesque performer currently has 544,777 followers on Twitter (December 15, 2010), which demonstrates her popularity. She has also produced successful vintage-inspired lingerie ranges for Wonderbra. As John Walsh reports in *The Independent* on August 28, 2010, the burlesque industry has helped to increase the desire for vintage underwear amongst women, with items such as stockings and corsets enjoying a revival, “you soon discover that burlesque—mild, peek-a-boo soft porn with ladies in ostrich feathers and outsize foundation garments, plays a major part in the vintage world” (Walsh 2010). The image of vintage lingerie has changed; it is now seen as a luxury item of indulgence, as evident through Dita Von Teese’s collaboration with Wonderbra, whereas in previous eras it was viewed as uncomfortable shapewear necessary to produce the correct silhouette. Some vintage garments that are bought today only achieve the right silhouette when worn with the correct undergarments, illustrating a modern-day demand for reproduction vintage lingerie.

2.5. Media

The media also impacts the rise of vintage fashion, as Palmer (2005: 197) states, “vintage is regularly featured within the pages of leading fashion and lifestyle magazines and is promoted as a sign of individuality and connoisseurship.” Little Red Vintage interviewee supports this disclosing that the store was recently interviewed for a feature in *Marie Claire* magazine along with three other vintage retailers (published in the January 2011 edition) demonstrating media interest in this growing trend. Like celebrities, film, television, and fashion catwalks have at some point focused on vintage fashion, which has also raised the profile of this trend.

2.5.1. Film and television

Film and television, like the arts and culture, have long since been used as sources of design inspiration by designers; similarly, popular television programs are a source of inspiration for consumers. The multi-award

winning television series *Mad Men* set in 1960s America portrays the fictional lives of people involved in the advertising industry on Madison Avenue. As reported on Reuters' website (2010), the season four premier of the drama series attracted 2.9 million viewers in America. In addition to this, Chris Tryhorn reports in *The Guardian* on January 28, 2010, that the debut of season three in the UK attracted 370,000 viewers. Each season's premiere has seen an increase in viewers' figures. Numerous newspaper articles have attributed the rise in demand for vintage fashions to the popularity of this program. Sarah Woodhead (2010) notes on *Queens of Vintage*, the online vintage magazine website, that "the US drama [had] spurred a resurgence of glamour" as is evident on the catwalks for the Fall 2010 season collections and throughout high street offerings, as designers such as Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton display collections that involve corsets, midi-skirts, and bow-trimmed shoes, similar to those worn in the 1950s and 1960s. The program has even had an impact on the types of models used during these catwalks, as curvy models are preferred over modern skinnier silhouettes to add more authenticity to the era being portrayed. Sarah Mower notes on the *Style.com* magazine's website that Marc Jacobs had used Lara Stone, "Karolina Kurkova and Elle Macpherson, all women whose physical attributes have acted as a disqualification for fashion show participation [in the past]" to showcase his collection as they have similar figures to women from that era. Chrissie Russell notes in an article in *The Independent* on October 26, 2010, how even retailers have noted the impact of the program on their recent sales, "I've not seen a reaction in fashion quite like the Mad Men effect—it's huge!" says Lisa Perkins co-owner of Perk Up Vintage store in Dublin." She also notes the influence of the television series does not end at vintage stores, as high street chains also note an increase in sales of vintage inspired garments, "Debenhams have seen retro sets of suspenders and stockings soar in popularity, with sales climbing more than 200 per cent as more and more people tune into the rising appeal of Mad Men." A continuation of the 1960s vibe can be seen in *A Single Man*, a film directed by Tom Ford, released in the UK in February 2010. The film, set in Los Angeles in 1962, may have contributed to the increase in popularity of vintage fashion as it portrays the fashion and lifestyles of that era in a glamorous manner.

2.5.2. Internet

The Internet has dramatically increased the awareness and popularity of vintage fashion making it accessible to a wide audience. There is a wealth of information on the background of vintage fashions with forums dedicated to the topic that can be used to aide consumers with their purchases. There is also an influx of craft forums demonstrating the popularity of people producing handmade goods, a pastime of postwar times.

Websites such as eBay are helping everyday consumers to buy into the vintage trend by making it more accessible and affordable as vintage

pieces are placed on auction sites. The popularity of the television series *Mad Men*, previously discussed, led eBay to report a rise in vintage sales as viewers of the drama attempt to recreate the 1960s look portrayed in the program. As the online news website *The Sentinel* reports on October 12, 2010, "Sales of full skirts are up by 252 per cent, with prom-style dresses making the third most-searched for item in the women's fashion category. Meanwhile chic kitten heel sales have jumped by 140 per cent and sling-back designs have soared by a staggering 600 per cent." The impact of the trend continues through to makeup purchases too, emphasizing the desire for consumers to recreate the whole look authentically. "The classic pillar-box red pout is also in vogue, with sales of red lipstick increasing by 117 per cent." *The Sentinel* also reports that people are buying into the whole lifestyle. The Internet has benefited vintage retailers as the interviewee from Memoir demonstrates in their move from a high street presence to a purely online operation to lower their overheads and reach a wider audience. This move has seen a rise in profits for the retailer resulting in plans to expand into customized vintage clothing.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are also increasing the availability of vintage fashion. A search for "vintage fair" groups on Facebook generated 434 results (November 2010). Social networking sites allow prompt updates of event information and for organizers to target interested people quickly and efficiently, as their members sign up for updates.

3. Research Findings and Discussion

The questionnaire results are given in this section with relevant points made by the interviewees and informal discussions that came about at the fairs with the respondents. The aim of the survey is to bring about a better understanding of vintage fashion consumers' spending and consumption habits, their vintage preferences, and demographics.

3.1. Respondent Demographics

Of the total 224 questionnaire respondents, 85 (38 percent) are male and 139 (62 percent) female. Over half (58.9 percent) of the respondents are aged between 25 and 39, which could be seen to be representing the core age group of the trend and almost a quarter of respondents (23.7 percent) are from the London area, which may be related to the large numbers of vintage shops in the city. There is also an 11.2 percent response from International vintage consumers from Europe, America, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. It must also be taken into account that respondents claiming to be from the London area are not necessarily "Londoners" as the city attracts many to relocate from around the UK and beyond. When grouping the 178 respondents from

England into the South region, the Midlands (a smaller geographical area), and the North region, the southern part of the country yields 57.9 percent, the Midlands 16.3 percent, and the North 25.8 percent. Considering that the South of England has a reputation for being wealthier than the North and Midlands, then the aspects related to economy in the literature may not have such a strong influence on the adoption of the trend.

3.2. Monthly Spend on Vintage Clothing

For non-UK readers the term “monthly spend” refers to the amount an individual or groups of individuals are currently spending on particular items over an average month.

More than half (58.9 percent) of the respondents claim to spend less than £40 per month, in particular those aged 16–24 and 30–39, 30 percent spend £40–£99 and only 11.1 percent spend over £100 per month on vintage clothing. The 25–29 age group and the 40–49 age group are more likely to spend £20–30 and the 50+ group £1–19 or £100+ (see Figure 3). It should be remembered that generally the mature market has more spending power and time to dedicate to a trend such as vintage. However, the 50+ age group have the lowest response rate (4.5 percent) and cannot be used as a reliable measure. Despite this, Vintage Retailer (B) supports this view stating that, “older people have more money available to spend, whereas the younger people are looking for a real bargain.” This suggests that the mature generations spend more on vintage purchases per month as they have the appropriate disposable income. Vintage Retailer (B) also notes their average consumer spend is £30–40, supporting this finding.

3.3. Monthly Spend on Vintage Accessories

Of the 224 respondents, 86.6 percent claim to spend less than £40 on vintage accessories per month. The reason for this could be that vintage



Figure 3
Monthly spend on vintage clothing
by age range.

accessories cost less than clothing and therefore require less spend rather than indicating that they buy less in terms of volume. One respondent at the fair explains that she only purchased vintage accessories because the clothing was too small; however, she still enjoyed vintage fashion and the social aspects. She claims to “*easily*” spend £100+ on vintage accessories per month to achieve a vintage styling to her look, which she completed with a vintage inspired hairstyle and makeup. Vintage Retailer (B) states that younger consumers “might buy a handbag at £10 whereas an older person may buy a crocodile handbag at £100,” indicating that older consumers can afford an authentic vintage look whereas younger consumers adopt a more affordable vintage inspired look.

3.4. Monthly Spend on Non-vintage Clothing

The results in Table 1 suggest that vintage consumers purchase new fashion clothing from the high street. Vintage accessories attract an average monthly spend of under £40 by 86.6 percent of the respondents and vintage clothing 58.93 percent compared to 72.3 percent for new clothing. Similarly, 11.2 percent spend £40–99 per month on vintage accessories and 29.9 percent spend this amount on average on vintage garments compared to 21.9 percent non-vintage and only 11.2 percent spend over £100 per month on vintage clothing compared to 21.9 percent spending the same on non-vintage clothing. This could indicate that consumers are still fashion-conscious and purchase other seasonal trends, which suggests that vintage is only one facet of their interests and lifestyle. However, respondents may view reproduction vintage clothing as non-vintage as this was not distinguished on the questionnaire.

3.5. The Attraction for Vintage

When respondents were asked what had attracted them to vintage a total of 925 responses were given as some had multiple reasons. The most popular attraction to the vintage trend is styling supported by 90.2 percent of the respondents, followed by quality (62.5 percent), one-of-a-kind (56.3 percent), lifestyle (44.6 percent), value for money (42.4 percent), nostalgia (41.1 percent), ethical/recycling (30.8 percent),

Table 1

Monthly spend on vintage and non-vintage clothing.

£	Vintage clothing	Non-vintage
1–19	134 (59.8 percent)	100 (44.6 percent)
20–39	60 (26.8 percent)	62 (27.7 percent)
40–59	20 (8.9 percent)	32 (14.3 percent)
60–79	2 (1 percent)	12 (5.4 percent)
80–99	3 (1.3 percent)	5 (2.2 percent)
+100	2 (1 percent)	13 (5.8 percent)

and the social aspect (24.1 percent). The increase in new vintage styles and the increase in availability (5.4 percent and 4.1 percent respectively) appear to have very little bearing on its appeal. Styling and quality both link to the standards in which vintage clothing was made, as garments were not mass-produced to the same extent as today and in many cases more time was spent making them. This could be viewed as a response by modern consumers against the trend for fast fashion. One-of-a-kind also supports the anti-fast fashion movement as identified by Palmer and Clark (2005) and DeLong *et al.* (2005). These views are also supported by Vintage Retailer (B), who states that people buy vintage as it offers quality and it is an investment as garments will last a long time, which intrinsically links to value for money. Vintage Retailer (B) also notes that much of her business is generated from consumers who “want to wear something that is unique.” ‘Lifestyle and nostalgia were identified in section 2.1.1. This supports Banim and Guy (2001) and DeLong *et al.* (2005) who suggest that the history of vintage pieces have an important influence on consumer purchasing decisions as it helps the consumer to connect with a past era. This was also echoed by both interviewees who referred to the history of vintage clothing and its connections with the past. Vintage Consumer (A) suggests that it “brings you closer to your family.” Value for money supports Butler’s (2010) indication of “hand-me-down enjoying a recessionary revival.” Consumers might be purchasing vintage fashion as a response to the current economic climate, as consumers have to consider their purchases more carefully during a recession, a view that is supported by Vintage Retailer (B) who reported an increase in sales due to the recession. Ethical/recycling indicates consumers are conscious about environmental issues in society as it has had an effect on their purchasing decisions, which supports Arnold (2009). Interestingly, the media elements discussed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 are not considered significant by the respondents. However, as these factors are quite subliminal, consumers may not realize the effects that they do have on their purchasing decisions, or they could also be viewed as being superficial. Vintage Retailer (B) states that the increase in popularity and therefore attraction to vintage fashion could be attributed to “famous models wearing vintage clothing” as they have made it seem “acceptable to people that otherwise would not have thought about it.” Perhaps the media is somewhat overrated as a significant influence of lifestyle. Vintage Consumer (A) also states “the whole vintage revival at the moment makes it all a lot more accessible,” which suggests that availability has increased; while vintage is more accessible this is not recognized as an attraction to the trend.

A further note of interest is the significant response rate for the social aspect. This is also evident during observations at the vintage fairs as consumers are with friends or relatives sharing an interest (see Figure 4). Vintage Retailer (B) notes that many of her customers purchase items to wear whilst attending vintage events and evenings and Vintage



Figure 4

Vintage consumers at the Manchester Vintage and Textile Fair held at the Armitage Centre, Manchester, UK. Photograph: Hannah Rose Bennett.

Consumer (A) states that she meets like-minded people during events who inform her of further events.

3.6. Favorite Vintage Eras

When asked to state their favorite vintage era multiple responses were again given yielding 435. The most popular eras are the 1940s (57.6 percent of the respondents), 1930s (50 percent), and 1950s (48.7 percent), followed by the 1920s (35.3 percent) and 1960s (20.1 percent). The 1970s and 1980s yield much lower responses (13.8 percent and 13.4 percent respectively). Perhaps the respondents who attend vintage fairs or subscribe to vintage blogs may seek clothing from the more popular eras, whereas consumers who look for 1980s clothing may use high street alternatives or simply do not consider the last forty years to be related to vintage. However, one young respondent states the 1990s as her favorite vintage era highlighting different attitudes between age

groups. Both interviewees comment on the current popularity of the 1940s era. Vintage Retailer (B) states that it is her bestselling era of clothing.

3.7. Vintage Purchases

Multiple responses (1,545) were also given when asked what vintage items were purchased. Dresses are the most popular vintage purchases among the female respondents (95 percent), followed by skirts (63.3 percent), then reproduction lingerie (39.6 percent). Overall, dresses are the top most popular fashion garment but second to accessories (76.8 percent of all respondents) when excluding male responses. Skirts are the third most popular (females only), followed by bags (54.2 percent), jewelry (53.1 percent), outerwear (51.8 percent), homeware (47.8 percent), suits (46 percent), shirts (44.6 percent), shoes (43.3 percent), jumpers (42 percent), (skirts 39.3 percent in the overall ranking), trousers (38.4 percent), tops (37.5 percent), reproduction lingerie (24.6 percent), costume (24.1 percent), and jeans (7.6 percent). The interest in reproduction lingerie may go some way to support Walsh (2010), who identifies the influence the burlesque industry has on consumers purchasing reproduction vintage lingerie. It also illustrates that there is a modern-day demand for these items, as they are necessary to achieve the right silhouette with some vintage garments, as stated in section 2.3. Vintage Retailer (B) notes 1940s crepe dresses are her best-sellers. Homeware also receives a significant response rate. This suggests that this is a way of life for a large proportion of vintage consumers, more than a fashion trend as they complete the whole “look” through every aspect of their life.

3.8. The Longevity of the Trend

Those new to the trend are either 16–19 years of age, 30–39, or over 50. More than half of the respondents (59.9 percent) have engaged with the vintage trend for five years or more, 23.7 percent engaging for three or four years, and 16.5 percent for two years or less. However, Vintage Retailer (B) states that she had seen an increase in popularity “over the last year...or 18 months,” whereas Vintage Consumer (A) has been purchasing vintage fashion for twenty-five years. This suggests that while the acquisition of vintage is not new, as a minority have long since had an active interest, it is the growth of this interest by fashion consumers from diverse demographics that has stimulated the extent and support for the trend in more recent years.

3.9. Purchasing New Vintage

There is little difference in new vintage purchasing behavior with 46.9 percent of respondents confirming that they purchase new vintage pieces, compared with 53.2 percent who do not. This includes fifty-three males and sixty-six females, with the majority aged 20–39. Of those who do

purchase new vintage, thirty-two are male and seventy-three female, aged mostly 25–39. Vintage Consumer (A) indicates that she has purchased new vintage items from Topshop; however, she states that she would not wear them to attend a vintage event as they would be recognized by attendees as lacking in authenticity. This signals the varying degrees of dedication to vintage fashion, which could be situation-dependent.

The most popular place to purchase vintage products is from specialist vintage shops (74.6 percent of those surveyed) closely followed by charity shops (73.2 percent), eBay (70.5 percent), and secondhand shops (67.9 percent). Just over half of the respondents also purchase from vintage fairs (58.9 percent) and around one-quarter (25.4 percent) claim to use vintage dealers. Just over one-fifth of the respondents use the Internet site etsy (22.8 percent) and other similar Internet sites, such as nasty gal vintage and jadore vintage clothing. Vintage auctions are least used attracting only 15.2 percent of the respondents; this may be due to the current limited number in the UK. Almost one-third (28.1 percent) purchase new vintage products from high street stores.

A spread of respondents purchasing from charity shops is relatively even across the age groups supporting the point raised in section 2.1 that consumers are experiencing a change in attitude, also raised in section 2. Vintage retailer Sophwaa's Corner (2010) also states that the stigma towards secondhand clothing has decreased. eBay gained the third highest response, supporting the subject of Internet retailing further highlighted in a statement by *The Sentinel* (2010) that reports a rise in vintage sales on eBay. Interest in etsy, a handmade and vintage item retail website, and other Internet sites also supports the concept of the part technology plays in the increase in popularity of vintage fashion. Vintage Retailer (B) notes the popularity of Internet usage amongst male vintage consumers, claiming "very often I'll sell one or two pieces [at a vintage fair], whereas if I put them online I can sell 20 or 30 items in a week for men." The majority of respondents that use vintage auctions are aged 25–49 and mostly from the South East or London regions, followed by the international respondents, and their monthly spend on vintage clothing is evenly spread. In addition, two respondents also purchase vintage from car boot sales and market stalls and another two also use personal tailors or dressmakers to reproduce styles for them.

3.10. Vintage Eras

To determine the most sought after vintage items, Figure 5 shows the eras that participants specifically note in their responses. It clearly shows the 1940s era as the most popular, followed by the 1950s, and then the 1930s. The 1940s is also highlighted as being the most popular era by both interviewees, Vintage Consumer (A) and Vintage Retailer (B). The most popular responses for items sought by respondents are shown in Figure 6 with various types of dresses (fifty-nine respondents), suits (fifty respondents), and accessories (thirty-seven respondents) being listed the

Figure 5
The eras that respondents mostly seek items from.

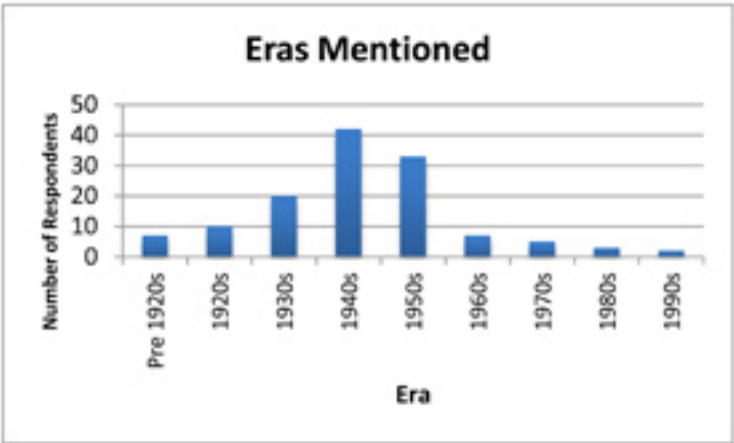
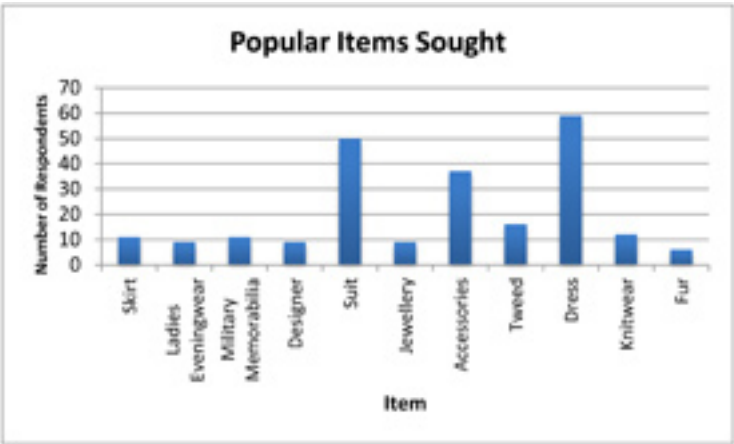


Figure 6
The vintage products that respondents mostly seek to purchase.



most. Only nine mention seeking a specific designer item, this includes those who especially mention Savile Row.

Table 2 shows the results of the final question used to determine how respondents describe the clothing from particular decades. Those found most synonymous with vintage are the 1940s and 1950s (84 percent and 77 percent respectively). The respondents are almost equally split on their views of the 1920s; half feel this decade is a stage further than vintage, agreeing that it is best described as antique, 46 percent, however, feel that this era is still vintage. Fewer respondents view the 1930s as antique (31 percent) as opposed to 65 percent viewing it as still vintage. In general terms antique is usually defined as being 100 years old or more. The results confirm that more respondents consider antique to be related to the decades that are close to 100 years ago. Like the 1920s, the views of the 1960s are split with 44 percent viewing

Table 2

Era descriptors according to the respondents.

Era	Antique	Vintage	Retro	Out-of-date
1920	50 percent	46 percent	2 percent	2 percent
1930	31 percent	65 percent	3 percent	0 percent
1940	10 percent	84 percent	6 percent	0 percent
1950	3 percent	77 percent	19 percent	0 percent
1960	1 percent	44 percent	51 percent	4 percent
1970	1 percent	18 percent	70 percent	12 percent
1990	1 percent	10 percent	59 percent	31 percent

the era as vintage and 51 percent retro, and 70 percent view the 1970s as retro. It can therefore be seen that in general terms when considering eras closer to the present, views move towards retro. Similarly with the 1980s where 59 percent view this era as being retro, others (31 percent) perceive it as being outdated. Out of interest, one respondent at a Vintage Fair from the younger age group asked if she could add 1990s as a vintage era category, which again demonstrates different perceptions of time in relation to vintage. This suggests that attitudes towards eras are probably closely correlated with age, as another respondent said “if you have lived through an era you would be less likely to class it as vintage.” The results of this question are shared by the interviewees: Vintage Consumer (A) classes anything pre-1950s as vintage and so does Vintage Retailer (B) but she stocks anything pre-1970s to cater for all consumer tastes.

3.11. Further Findings

During informal observations at the Manchester Vintage Fashion and Textile Fair at the Armitage Centre a large number of vintage consumers can be seen to be purchasing vintage fabrics, wool, and patterns in order to make their own clothing. Vintage Consumer (A) supports these observations saying that she would alter and adjust her purchases for a better fit and has a friend who also knits items for her using original 1940s knitting patterns. Vintage Retailer (B) says that her consumers regularly talk of adjusting or customizing their purchases and of their intentions to use the garments for patterns. This supports the discussion in section 2.1.1 regarding an apparent return to the make do and mend way of thinking.

Through the informal observations it can be determined that there is a type of vintage consumer, who may be described as the “vintage eccentric,” that follows all aspects of the vintage lifestyle, even down to mannerisms. They appear to have more spending power, as they are willing to pay more for authentic vintage pieces. It can also be said that the vintage phenomenon is not such a new movement, as previously

identified, which may be attributed to the large number of older generation respondents engaging with the questionnaire survey.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to explore the principal factors and the demographics of vintage consumers in the UK and their consumption habits to better understand the appeal and scope of this growing trend. Through the literature review it was suggested that vintage fashion has links with nostalgia, which is influenced by the interlinked factors: changing attitudes towards secondhand goods and personal values; the style and quality of products and their ability to offer individuality; design inspiration and marketed fashion trends; a response to environmental issues and fast fashion; celebrities and popular television programs promoting and upgrading the image of vintage; and the role of the media and the Internet, particularly online auctions, Internet retailing, and social networks, as a supporting system for the trend. Intrinsic in these factors are the impact of the current economic climate and the desire to obtain a simpler lifestyle reminiscent of those from past eras.

Through the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews the attraction of the trend is explored from a consumer perspective and from that of vintage fashion retailers for a market perspective allowing for the conceptualization of differences between vintage consumers and consumption to better understand the nature of this popular trend and its appeal. The findings suggest that females are more likely to engage with the trend than males; however, males did constitute a substantial one-third of the survey respondents. The core age range can be determined as being 25–39 but by no means exclusive to this age group as the remaining 41.1 percent of the respondents are relatively evenly spread throughout the extremities, 16–19 and 50+ age groups being less populated. As the majority of the questionnaires were completed online the more mature vintage consumer may not engage with social networks and the younger age group may be less likely to attend regular fairs where the remaining questionnaires were completed. A larger majority of respondents are found to be from the South of England, which may correspond with the large numbers of vintage boutiques in and around the capital city renowned as the UK's fashion city. Monthly spend is more suggestive of hobby purchasing rather than one of more serious investments with more than half of the respondents spending less than £40 per month. This suggests that less than £10 per week which, to put into perspective, is most likely to be less than the average smokers weekly spend on cigarettes.

While many of the interviewees supported the majority of the apparent influences that drive the vintage trend, the survey findings suggest

that it is the personal elements of style, quality, and individuality that are considered to be the main drivers by fashion consumers. The recycling aspect is a consideration of one-third of the respondents and the social aspects appeal to one-quarter of those surveyed but the media and celebrities are not important factors. However, these could be viewed as subliminal factors and consumers may not be aware of the extent of media influence on their purchasing decisions and behavior.

The most popular eras are the 1930s to 1950s. This may be because the majority of the respondents view these decades as the most synonymous with vintage. Earlier decades are viewed to be more antique than vintage and later decades are viewed as retro or simply out-of-date fashions. Dresses, skirts, and accessories are the most sought-after products. While the reasons why were not explored, accessories make for cheap purchases to bring the vintage look to any ensemble. The most popular places to purchase vintage are vintage and charity shops, eBay, and secondhand shops. Fairs are not so popular, which may be because they often have entrance fees that will leave less to spend on goods.

This study achieves its aim in being instrumental in providing more understanding of the UK vintage consumer and their spending habits. It reveals some important findings, including some contradictions with assertions made in the literature. Consequently it provides a good foundation for a further study using a more probing survey to bring deeper insights to assist the development of robust consumer typologies and to thoroughly compare the vintage and non-vintage purchasing habits of vintage consumers that is lacking here.

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 Snooky Ookums, www.snookyookums.co.uk.
 Sophwaa's Corner.

